



Raleigh
Arts

2026-2027 Arts Learning Community for Universal Access

The City of Raleigh Arts Commission and United Arts Wake County are partnering again to offer a yearlong arts learning community that uses a collaborative approach to advocating for and improving access to the arts for people with disabilities. Up to 16 representatives of Raleigh and Wake County organizations will be selected to participate in this program (maximum 2 representatives per organization).

Now in its 11th year, this program begins with the Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability Conference (LEAD®), hosted by the John F. Kennedy Center in Philadelphia in mid-August. Learning community members receive scholarships of up to **\$3,100** to cover conference attendance costs, then spend the rest of their year together benefiting from peer learning as they work to improve accessibility within their individual organizations.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Once accepted into the program, this year's learning community members will

- attend the Learning Community's kick-off meeting in late July or early August;
- on Tuesday, August 11 attend either the late day Learning Community preconference meet-up or a LEAD® preconference session;
- attend the full LEAD® Conference in Philadelphia running Wednesday–Friday, August 12-14, flying out the day after it ends;
- meet every month through July 2027 in facilitated sessions to share lessons learned, discuss issues and achievements in their accessibility work, and explore accessibility topics of mutual interest to the group (attendance at nine meetings required);
- identify individual organizational goals/projects to accomplish during the year to increase accessibility for people with disabilities; and
- share what they have learned through a group presentation or project for the arts community at large.

ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE IN ARTS AND DISABILITY (LEAD®) CONFERENCE

Wednesday–Friday, August 12-14, 2026

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Running three full days (with one additional day of optional preconference sessions beforehand), the John F. Kennedy Center's national conference is a concentrated, immersive educational experience in making cultural environments and programming accessible. LEAD® features over 100 sessions on topics like physical and programmatic access, universal design, arts education for students with disabilities, cultivating institutional buy-in, legal issues, and marketing strategies. Attendees exchange ideas, learn about best practices, and participate in discussions with leaders in the field. www.kennedy-center.org.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME AT LEAD®: Learning Community members are expected to attend the entire conference. Members should plan to travel to Cleveland at least a day before the conference starts and fly out no earlier than the following Saturday. Interested in doing some preconference sessions? Consider sharing a hotel room with another Learning Community member to keep all your costs within maximum scholarship \$\$'s!

LEAD® CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Learning community members will receive scholarships of up to **\$3,100** to fully cover conference registration/fees, travel and accommodations. Scholarship amounts will be determined based on whether or not learning community members plan to attend preconference sessions in addition to the main conference. If applicant scholarship needs exceed funds available, applicants may be offered partial support. Payment of scholarship funds will be made after LEAD® Conference attendance upon submission of proof of registration and attendance.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Organizations: Must be located within Wake County and be a nonprofit exempt from federal and state income tax as either (1) a charitable organization with 501(c)(3) designation by the Internal Revenue Service with established arts programming or (2) a unit of municipal government.

Proposed Organizational Representatives: Must have been involved with the applicant organization for at least one year prior to this July and work an average of 20 hours/week over the course of a year (1,040 hours annually).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Deadline: Applications must be **received** no later than **Thursday, April 30 at 4:00 pm**. Applications may be emailed (sarah.corrin@raleighnc.gov), delivered by hand or mailed to Raleigh Arts, by the deadline.

How to Apply

Eligible groups must submit a completed Arts Learning Community for Universal Access Application Form (six pages) for each proposed participant (maximum 2) from their organization.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications that are complete and received by the deadline will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Track record/commitment of applicant organization to making programming accessible for people with disabilities
- Appropriateness of participation by proposed individual in terms of professional responsibilities and prior disability experience
- Potential impact of the learning community experience on proposed individual and organization going forward as they continue working to improve accessibility in arts programming and accommodations for people with disabilities
- For previous grant recipients and/or learning community members, quality of past grant compliance/participation

NOTIFICATION

Notification of acceptance into the Arts Learning Community will be made by email by **Friday, May 22**. Participants will receive a letter of agreement, forms and other documents the following week.

QUESTIONS?

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